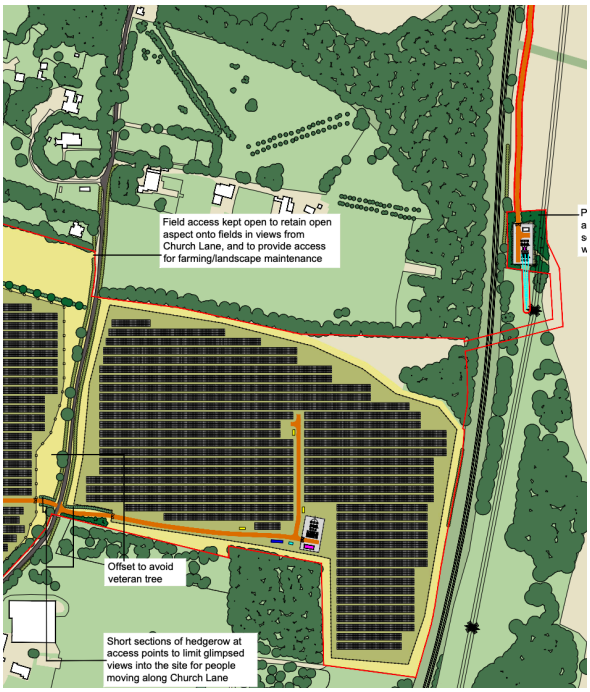
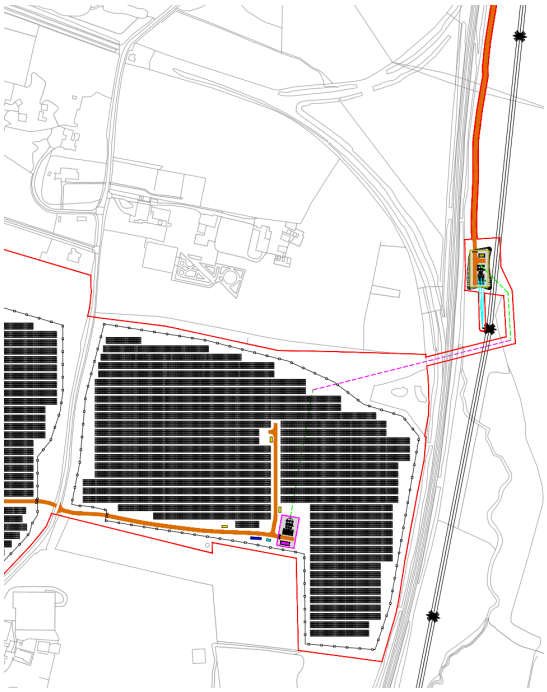
Mitigation for Uplands
For consideration at the resumed without prejudice Conditions Session

We, John and Annie Owen, of Uplands in Bentley, are writing - yet again - about the almost total lack of mitigation offered us by those planning a solar park in the middle of our village. We also wish to consider what form any future mitigation offer might take.

Our home sits immediately to the north of the eastern section of the solar park. Below are two views of the field on which that installation might sit, one from our track and one from further inside our land

Below are two site plans from the appellant's documentation.

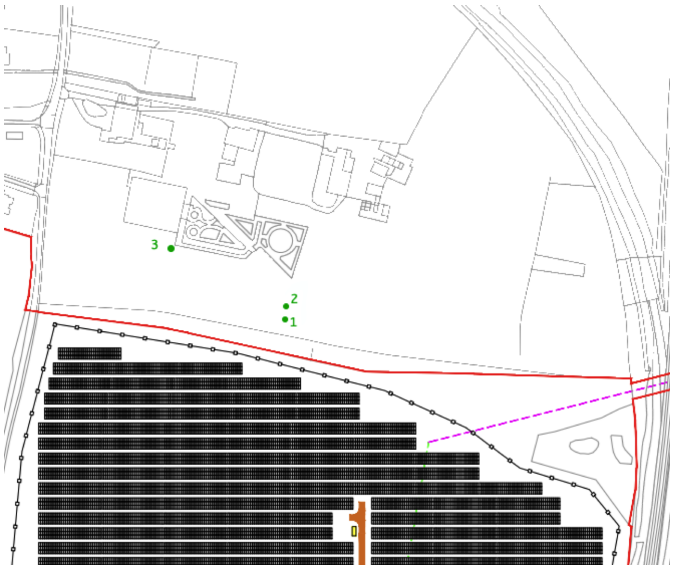




Our track is missing from both of these site plans. In the left-hand plan, the line of fluffy green vegetation between the eastern site and Uplands gives the impression of screening. The two photos we have provided show how misleading that is. Our track, which we use on a daily basis, is between the solar park site and our line of trees (first photo). Our trees are low-lying (our land dips down towards the boundary) and

deciduous, therefore providing no screening in the leafless months (second photo). The poplars behind them - remnants of the time when Uplands was a fruit farm and characteristic of fruit farms across Suffolk - are sparse and very tall, thus providing no screening all year round.

We begin by looking at possible hedge planting. Mr. Mason, during Mr. Hill's cross-examination, proposed that there was room between the site fence and the site boundary to plant a hedge. Without a scale for the drawings, it is difficult to judge just how much room there actually is, but anyway our calculations show that no hedge could be large enough to protect us.



We calculated the heights needed for screening from three viewpoints, shown to the left.

We used photographs and scaling, using the height of our boundary fence as a marker.

At point 1, a hedge height of 5.7m would be needed to screen the field

At point 2, 6.4 metres

At point 3, 12 metres. We are, at this point, less than half-way towards our house, yet already, the height of hedge required to hide the solar park is extreme. It would take 30-40 years for a beech hedge to reach this height.

There is also the need for large hedges to have a thick base. A 12 metre beech hedge would need a thickness at the base of 3 metres, at least. Can such a base be accommodated between the security fence and the site boundary? Large machinery would be needed to maintain such a big hedge. Would there be sufficient space to enable this machinery to access the hedge on both sides? This is all becoming ridiculous.

As the fence sits too low to be seen from further into Uplands, we could do no further calculations, but it is obvious that the height required very soon becomes nigh impossible. Few deciduous hedges can reach the required heights. Once we reach a need for a 16 metre hedge, only non-native hedges like thuja and leylandii will fix the problem and these would be totally out of character with the surrounding landscape and the conservation area.

We think all the above establishes that hedging cannot screen us adequately from the solar park.

Let us return to our track. The solar park comes very close to our fence - indeed, it is so close that all elements will easily be seen for many years while a hedge grows and it will always be highly visible in winter. Also, the lighting and camera poles will almost be over our heads. Some relief would come from being given the same setback provided to the homes on the western site. A smaller eastern section would also mean that the transformers would be moved further from our border.

To conclude, should the solar park go ahead, we cannot be protected from it by hedging. We could, however, have the impact lessened - solely along our track - with both setback and hedging along the northern border of the eastern site.